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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 007099

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: DCHOD BASBUG APPRECIATES US HELP IN MOSUL BUT
WON'T SPEAK OUT; MFA REQUESTS INVESTIGATION

REF: ANKARA 7075

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i. Robert S. Deutsch for reasons 1.
4 (b) and (d).

11. (U) This is an action request -- see para 10.

12. (C) Summary: Responding to reports of the December 17 attack on a Turkish police convoy in Mosul, Turkish First Army Commander Tolon told journalists on December 19 that this attack, occurring in a place "that is under the control of a country that we know and describe as an ally and a friend is extremely saddening." DCHOD Basbug told the Charge on December 21 that Tolon's comments reflected that general's emotions and did not represent the view of Turkish Armed Forces. Basbug indicated that he would call both VCJCS Gen Pace and DCDR EUCOM Gen Wald to express appreciation for US forces' engaging the enemy during the attack on the Turks and for the subsequent actions to repatriate the body of the killed policemen. Subsequently, MFA informed us that they planned to put out a statement expressing appreciation. MFA also formally requested the US investigate who was behind the attack. End summary.

13. (U) According to Turkish media reports on December 20, Turkish First Army Commander Hursit Tolon made the following comment to journalists covering the opening ceremony of a primary school near Istanbul regarding the December 17 attack on Turkish police in Mosul (reftel). (FYI: The police were en route to Baghdad to take up security duties at the Turkish Embassy.):

"The fact that this incident took place in a region that is under the control of a country that we know and describe as an ally and a friend is extremely saddening. This region is a perfect example of the willingness of some in the region to bite the hand that feeds them. It is a sign of how much this place, which we have propped up for years has assumed a hostile attitude toward Turkey. This incident won't end here. I know that these kinds of incidents will continue. Nearly 90 of our citizens have been killed in that region so far. We are taking note of this situation."

14. (C) The Charge raised Tolon's statement with Deputy Chief of the General Staff GEN Ilker Basbug on December 21, noting that it was unacceptable for a senior military leader to suggest that the US bore responsibility for the attack and to put into question the basic nature of our alliance. Basbug responded by stating that Tolon spoke from emotions evoked by this serious incident. He (Tolon) was unaware of the information TGS had on the incident and the cooperation the US military had extended to Turkey. Tolon's comments did not reflect the view of the Turkish Armed Forces, he declared. In fact, Basbug planned to call both VCJCS Gen Pace and Deputy Commander EUCOM Gen Wald to express thanks for the prompt action of US forces in Mosul to engage the enemy during the attack on the Turkish police. The Charge reminded him that our military had also gone to extraordinary lengths after the attack to retrieve the bodies of the five killed policemen, treat the wounded Turk and transport the bodies to the Turkish border. Basbug said that these actions were also appreciated.

15. (C) Basbug reiterated his request for information on the perpetrators of the attack. (FYI: Turkish columnists were rife with speculation on December 21 about who did this, with favorite suspects ranging from the PKK, KDP, Israelis, and the US; only one paper we saw suggested it was AIF.) The Charge responded that we had shared all the information we had on the attack and, given the security environment in Mosul, it was unlikely that the US military would be able to find any useful information even if they had the resources to devote to the task. Basbug took the point.

16. (C) Basbug resisted the Charge's suggestion that TGS should speak out publicly on the attack to correct Tolon's implication and the wild speculation in the press. Similarly, Basbug indicated he was not particularly receptive to the suggestion that TGS announce that he was expressing appreciation for the US's assistance. Separately, IO raised the issue with the MFA spokesman who indicated that he would comment favorably on the US role in the incident at his regular press briefing on December 22. Later, the MFA spokesman contacted us to say the Ministry planned to release a statement the afternoon of December 21.

17. (C) Finally, in the afternoon of December 21, MFA Iraq Coordinator Osman Koruturk contacted the Charge "under instructions from Foreign Minister Gul" to express appreciation for US military action during and after the Mosul attack. He also conveyed what he said was a formal request also at the instruction of Gul for the US to investigate the incident to determine who was responsible for the attack. The Charge responded that it was unlikely such an investigation could occur, but he agreed to pass the request on.

18. (C) Comment: Last September, TGS made some ill-informed statements about coalition action in Tal Afar. We and Task Force Olympia (TFO -- who was carrying out the operation) subsequently supplied TGS with accurate information that contradicted their initial public comments. Since then, TGS has been hesitant to speak out on military operations in Iraq. This case appears no different, even though Turks were the victims.

19. (C) Comment (cont.): Tolon has a reputation as an outspoken hardliner. Since his move to Istanbul to command the First Army last August, however, he has been extremely quiet. TGS had a firm gag on all senior officers in the run-up to the December 17 EU summit. Tolon's comments may suggest the gag is off, although it isn't clear yet whether TGS removed it or Tolon, who is expected to retire next summer, was speaking out of school. Basbug's failure to criticize Tolon directly to us may be an unwillingness to wash TGS' dirty laundry in front of us, but it also may be a more disturbing indication of deeper ills. End comment.

110. (C) Action Request: Although various Turkish officials, including Basbug, had expressed an interest in the US investigating the Mosul incident, Koruturk's message from Gul was the first formal request. We request guidance on how to respond.

11. BAGHDAD MINIMIZE CONSIDERED
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